



Our Mission:

"To educate and provide opportunities for people of diverse interests to work together to improve the environmental, recreational, cultural, and economic resources of the Rock River Basin"

For Immediate Release

May 11, 2006

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Johnson Creek Students Plant Rain Garden for Village

Johnson Creek High School students in the Ecology and Fish and Wildlife classes taught by Brian Zachgo and Ed Bielinski recently learned about the benefits of rain gardens and helped to design and install a large rain garden in the parking lot and public works yard at the Johnson Creek Wastewater Treatment Plant.

The project is an educational effort by the Rock River Coalition's "Rain Garden in Every Community" initiative, Johnson Creek High School, and the Village of Johnson Creek.

A rain garden is a depression that is designed to absorb and infiltrate water that runs off roofs, parking lots, streets, and hills. The goals of the project are to slow down and infiltrate storm water in order to improve water quality and replenish groundwater, to create a beautiful focal point at the west entrance to the Village, to demonstrate what a rain garden is to homeowners and developers, and to provide habitat for birds, amphibians, and native insects.

Through the "Rain Garden in Every Community" program the students heard from Ellen Rulseh, Rock River Coalition Community Outreach Coordinator, who talked about what a rain garden is and how it functions.

The following week Village consultants Margaret Burlingham of LanDesign and Hope Oostdik of Dutch Designs lead the class in selecting plants for the rain garden. The classes also visited the Wastewater Treatment Plant to see the site in its "before" condition and to understand the flow of water through the parking lot and off the surrounding hills.

The 6,400 square foot rain garden was planted on May 9 and 10 with over 1700 native plants and prairie seed. Over 20 students joined in the installation by mulching the entire garden in record time. They also helped Peter Hartz, Village Water Supervisor, prepare parts of the site for a prairie planting that will take place this fall. The project provided lessons in biology,

hydrology, ecology, and rain garden installation. The installation provided the students with an opportunity to complete a volunteer service project.

The students who participated in this project will make a presentation on what they have learned to the School Board and community. Subsequent classes will carry on the project as they monitor the results of the planting.

“A Rain Garden in Every Community” is funded by the EPA, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, and Wisconsin Environmental Education Board.

The teachers received “The Storm Water Curriculum & Teaching Guide” that was developed by Earth Partnership for Schools, UW-Madison Arboretum and Madison Area Municipal Storm Water Partnership. Prairie Nursery, Westfield, provided plant catalogs for use by the students. Plants were purchased from Agrecol and the Village of Johnson Creek provided site preparation and leaf mulch.

For more information on “A Rain Garden in Every Community” please contact Ellen Rulseh and the Rock River Coalition at 920-674-7443.

Water Supervisor Hartz sees the grounds of the Wastewater Treatment Plant as an educational center where people can learn about water quality, storm water, ecology, and the natural environment. Hartz has been working with LanDesign and Dutch Designs to develop and install a plan for the grounds and Village lands along the banks of Johnson Creek that includes trails, native plantings, stream bank buffers, and improvement of the existing lowland woods and sedge meadows.

The public is invited to view the rain garden during regular business hours at the Wastewater Treatment Plant just west of the Village on Hwy B.